



Francis P. Martin

\$2.50

# RELIEF FROM UNBELIEF



**WARNING:** Unbelief Is Known To Be Hazardous To Your Health. Continued Use Will Cause Hardness Of Heart, And You May Be Suddenly Destroyed Without Remedy.

# Table of Contents

Contents

About Our Subject

Part One

Chapter 1: Unbelief is a Decision

A. FAITH

B. FEAR

C. DOUBT

D. UNBELIEF

Chapter 2: But Haven't They Heard?

Chapter 3: Unbelief is Insubordination

THE "BUT" CHRISTIANS

Chapter 4: Causes Hardness of Heart

PAUL HARDENED HEARTS

STEPHEN'S INVITATION

THE UNBELIEVING JEWS

Chapter 5: Destroyed Without Remedy

Chapter 6: Symptoms In Today's Church

Chapter 7: Prays the Wrong Prayer

Chapter 8: Unbeliefs Relief

Part Two

Chapter 9: The Severity of Unbelief

A. THE CALL

B. THE TASK

C. THE FAILURE

D. THE REBUKE

E. THE EXCUSE

F. THE PENALTY

Other Books By FRANCIS MARTIN



Francis P. Martin

\$2.50

# RELIEF FROM UNBELIEF



**WARNING:** Unbelief Is Known To Be Hazardous To Your Health. Continued Use Will Cause Hardness Of Heart. And You May Be Suddenly Destroyed Without Remedy.



**Francis P. Martin**

P.O. Box 52444  
Lafayette, Louisiana 70505

Rev. Martin is a deep South Louisiana "CAJUN" born of French parents. After being raised in that land's strict Catholicism, he was born again at the age of 23. He spent the next ten years with the Southern Baptist before entering the End Time Charismatic Teaching Ministry—which was, of course, after he received the Baptism of the Holy Ghost.

He has three previous books:

Hung by the Tongue

Loosed from the Noose

Relative Humility 100%

This fourth book, "Relief from Unbelief" is certainly a TIMELY message for the Church. We believe it will strike some chords of God within the Christian's life that have been silenced too long.



**HARRISON HOUSE**

P.O. Box 35035  
Tulsa, Okla. 74135

ISBN 0-89274-154-6

# RELIEF FROM UNBELIEF

---

*by*

*Francis P. Martin*

*For Bible Teaching seminars, books, and tapes contact:*

Francis P. Martin

P. O. Box 52444

Lafayette, Louisiana 70505



**HARRISON HOUSE**

P.O. Box 35035

Tulsa, Okla. 74135

All Scripture quotations in this volume are from the *King James Version* of the Bible, unless otherwise stated.

*My thanks to Dick Corbit of Canton, Ohio for this book's title suggestion*

ISBN 0-89274-154-6

Printed in the United States of America

Copyright © 1980 by Francis P. Martin

All Rights Reserved

# **Contents**

About Our Subject

## **PART ONE**

Chapter 1

Unbelief is a Decision

- A. Faith
- B. Fear
- C. Doubt
- D. Unbelief

Chapter 2

But Haven't They Heard?

Chapter 3

Unbelief is Insubordination

Chapter 4

Causes Hardness of Heart

Chapter 5

Destroyed Without Remedy

Chapter 6

Symptoms in Today's Church

Chapter 7

Prays the Wrong Prayer

Chapter 8

Unbelief's Relief

## **PART TWO**

The Severity of Unbelief

- A. The Call
- B. The Task
- C. The Failure
- D. The Rebuke
- E. The Excuse
- F. The Penalty

## **About Our Subject**

From our title you may have already noted that the subject of this writing is UNBELIEF. Also you may notice that we are treating it as symptomatic of a disease. And truly, reading about unbelief in the Word of God will convince you that God is saying, “It is the worst of all diseases.”

Man is always searching for CURES of his own ailments, and many supposed “CURE-ALLS” have come and gone. When man searches for a cure or remedy, he must first learn all that is to be known and learned about the disease to be relieved.

YET UNBELIEF seems to be a mystery to MOST Christians. If I were to ask you, “What is unbelief?” what would you answer? Still further, go into any assembly of Christians and ask the same question, and their answers will prove their ignorance of unbelief. They can describe the popular diseases of today, some with names as long as your arm, because these diseases have been so highly advertised on TV by drug companies, but are unable to tell you what unbelief is.

The Bible has the answer. In the following pages I will endeavor to describe unbelief in Bible terms; point out the inherent dangers; discuss some present day resultant conditions; and after revealing it in your life, suggest a mode of cure that you can choose to effect for your own RELIEF AND CONTINUED PREVENTION.

You may have noticed from the index that this writing is divided into two parts. The reason for this is that we have dealt with the subject in two different manners.

Part One is a topical study of unbelief and its development, and Part Two is a character teaching taken from King Saul’s life.

I believe this teaching is a timely message. May it serve to encourage the CHURCH of the Lord Jesus Christ to return to her first love through the simplicity of God’s Word.



## **Part One**

## **Chapter 1: Unbelief is a Decision**

There are many Bible words that are in use today in church circles that have lost their meaning. These are good words, often-used words, popular words, religious-sounding words, but VAGUE words.

Before we proceed any further in this study, we must identify these words in order to get the clear Bible meaning of the word *UNBELIEF*.

Our trail of words will take us across *FAITH*, *FEAR*, and *DOUBT* before we come to the word *UNBELIEF*. Many Christians use the words DOUBT and UNBELIEF interchangeably and often vaguely combine the two, knowing that they are both bad, but not understanding how they apply.

Neither have we understood how doubt and unbelief come about nor how they work. We've been ignorant of their nature and especially of how to remove ourselves from the dread pits of doubt and unbelief. We've questioned of doubt and unbelief, "Is it a demon spirit?" "Is it a condition of the mind or heart?" "What are these critters?" Let's find out.

## **A. FAITH**

Starting from the beginning we know that *FAITH* is **substance** and **evidence**, according to Hebrews 11:1. We also know that faith (God type of faith) comes from God (Romans 12:3) and comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God (Romans 10:17).

For simplicity, allow me to say that FAITH comes by receiving information from God. God's Word will build faith for the hearer, the person that will hear with an intent to OBEY.

## B. FEAR

FEAR is the next word in our study. Some things that we say of FAITH, we can also say of FEAR.

1. BOTH come by receiving information.
2. BOTH will motivate you.
3. BOTH will produce in your life.

*First*, both come by receiving information, but FAITH is built on information from God, and FEAR is built on information from SATAN or demons, your neighbors, doctors, newspapers, weather reports, a phone call at midnight from the police concerning an accident involving your car when your children are not home yet, depression, inflation, gas shortage, epidemic report, blah, blah, blah, etc. As I write this, someone just walked in and handed me today's newspaper. Headline reads: "272 DIE IN DEADLIEST U.S. AIR CRASH."

FEAR comes by receiving information. Have you noticed?

By the way, if you fly a lot, don't go to see any "AIRPORT" movies.

*Secondly*, both FAITH and FEAR will motivate you; will cause you to move.

Faith from God's Word will enable you to move, causing you to step out in faith and act on God's Word. Faith without acts is dead. Faith is *ACTING* like God told you the truth.

Faith caused DAVID to run *towards* the giant. You will move towards the problem and whip it.

FEAR will cause you to move, but in the opposite direction of faith. You will run *FROM* the problem.

The Greek word for FEAR is "PHOBOS" and means to be *intimidated by the enemy*, to be in *dread, terror, and flight*.

To be in flight from the enemy means that the devil is chasing you; and, in fact, we are supposed to CHASE HIM.

We see that the Christian's armor in Ephesians (six) does not afford covering protection for the *BACK*. Why? Because we are not supposed to turn our backs in flight but to march in and overpower the enemy.

Now if you get shot in the BACKSIDE with the darts of the enemy, we know what you've been doing.

After a visit to a psychiatrist, the patient might ignorantly brag, "The doctor told me that I have a phobia." That's the exact word used in the Bible for fear (NOTHING TO BRAG ABOUT).

Fear will cause you to run, to the doctor, to the finance company, to the

insurance company. Faith will cause you to run to God, then run towards the problem and run over it.

*Thirdly*, both FAITH and FEAR will **produce** in your life. Faith will produce the desired outcome of what God's Word said, and fear will produce the thing that the devil said.

Job 3:25, "For the thing which I greatly feared is come upon me, and that which I was afraid of is come unto me."

God continually warns us not to fear, because we will produce in our life the thing which we fear. So then refuse to fear; do NOT fear, abstain from nurturing fear from wrong information.

When someone says, "I'm afraid that I am catching a cold," they are actually saying, "*I BELIEVE* I am catching a cold," and Mark 11:23 comes into effect, what you say and believe you will GET.

## C. DOUBT

Now that we have looked briefly at faith and fear, let's examine DOUBT in order to get its clear simple meaning.

As FAITH and FEAR are built by an abundance of information (one from God's Word, the other from someone else's word), so then *conversely* — DOUBT IS A **LACK OF INFORMATION**. DOUBT is ignorance. Simply not knowing anything about a certain matter.

You may offer to pray for someone and say, "God will relieve you of that condition." As they decline your prayer, they will say, "Oh, I doubt that." Why? Not enough information. In every instance in the Bible, when doubt is seen, it is due to either a lack of information or improper balance of information.

There are many different kinds of doubt in the Bible, but all stem from a lack of information.

DOUBT can mean:

To Hold in Suspense

A Rise of the Breath

To contend or differ with God

To be anxious

Not knowing the outcome

DOUBLE MINDED

STANDING IN TWO WAYS

To be IN QUESTION

INDECISION — UNABLE TO MOVE.

Faith and Fear will motivate but DOUBT will not allow motivation.

When arriving at a crossroads the traveler realizes he does not know which direction to go in order to get to a certain town. There are NO signs, yet he must choose the correct road. He is unable to do so with NO information. He can guess, but that's one chance of three. If he is wise, he will inquire of a local resident or consult a map to build his faith in any particular route.

God's Word is our map and the devil tries to hand us a false map of fear. We must choose one of many ways.

DO YOU NEED FAITH? then HEAR and DO God's Word.

ARE YOU IN FEAR? then cut off BAD information source and hear and DO God's Word.

ARE YOU in DOUBT? then get more information and Hear and DO God's Word.

We see that the cure of all these conditions is the same, and it is *our* choice to operate in FAITH, FEAR, or DOUBT.

## D. UNBELIEF

Now we will consider Unbelief, the main subject of this writing.

NO one is *qualified* to be in unbelief until they have heard the Word of God or have seen His handiwork.

The preaching of the Word makes people responsible for what they've heard.

PRIOR to hearing, the condition is DOUBT, IGNORANCE, or a LACK of INFORMATION. But **AFTER HEARING THE WORD**, some amount of FAITH is expected, and a **refusal to obey** what was heard is termed as *UNBELIEF*.

So then unbelief comes *after* hearing and NOT before. (DOUBT is the condition before.)

Unbelief is a *DECISION*.

The DECISION is *NOT TO DO* what you've heard. JAMES 4:17, "To him that knoweth to do good and doeth it not, to him it is sin." The sin is UNBELIEF.

Let me ask, Are you qualified for unbelief? Have you heard more than you're doing? Is there an area that you are hesitant in?

You are responsible for what you've heard. The safest thing for you is to say, "Yes, my decision is to do the words that I've heard." And this is what pleases God, FAITH THAT ACTS.

This is the sin—*THE SIN*.

We all know what John 3:16 says. Then verse 17 explains that Jesus did not come to condemn the world but that the world through Him might be saved.

"He that believeth on Him is **NOT** condemned but he that **believeth NOT** is condemned already, because he hath **NOT believed** in the name of the only begotten Son of God."

(Now we already said that you are *NOT* responsible to believe before you *have heard*, because before you've heard is a *doubt* condition. Unbelief is the condition *AFTER* you've heard and refused.)

This is exactly what verse 19 says, "And this is the condemnation, THAT LIGHT IS COME INTO THE WORLD."

Does that mean that light is condemnation? NO, Jesus came **NOT** to condemn the world.

What is the sin? The sin is that **AFTER** light was seen, **THEY CHOSE**, they made a decision, a qualified decision, to do evil.

"LIGHT IS COME INTO THE WORLD AND MEN LOVED DARKNESS



RATHER THAN LIGHT BECAUSE THEIR DEEDS WERE EVIL.”

We must emphasize, “*THEY CHOSE.*” Unbelief is a decision, *AFTER* you’ve heard the Word, *after* you’ve seen the light; an educated decision NOT TO DO.

Doubt is an uneducated situation and faith is a decision to do what you’ve heard, but unbelief is a decision to have NO actions.

UNBELIEF IS FAITH WITHOUT ACTIONS.

FAITH WITHOUT ACTIONS IS DEAD.

## Chapter 2: But Haven't They Heard?

We now turn to Romans 10:13, “For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord, shall be saved.” (AMEN, BROTHER, we all believe that.)

But there is a problem question, “But how shall they call?” To be saved, one must call on the Name of the Lord, but how can they call on Him in whom they have not believed?

The obvious answer could be, “They CANNOT; it’s impossible to call on someone in whom they’ve never believed.”

So then, we must get them to believe, but how can they believe on Him of whom they have not *HEARD*? Good question; they need to *hear*...

But how shall they hear without a preacher? — Oh, good thinking; yes, we need preachers so they can **hear**, so they can **believe**, so they can **call**, so they can be **saved**. Amen?

But who is going to preach? Or how shall they preach except they be sent? Oh, how valuable are God-sent preachers, and how beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace and bring glad tidings of good things.

That’s it, here is the final solution, we’ve found the missing link; God has to send someone to *preach*, then comes *hearing*, *believing*, *calling*, and finally *saving*. Problem solved. Hallelujah!!

Hold it . . . Wait a minute ... I hear Isaiah saying something; yes, it’s something Isaiah said— “Lord, who hath believed our report?” (Isaiah 53:1) WE HAVE EXECUTED ALL OF THE ABOVE PLAN BUT IT DID NOT WORK. That is what Paul is referring to in our next verse, which is Romans 10:16, “But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For ESAIAS saith, Lord, who hath believed our report?”

In other words, Isaiah prophesied that they would see Jesus, His love, miracles, suffering, and death, and then esteem Him smitten of God, not recognizing His purpose.

So there is another problem in our seemingly final solution of PREACH, HEAR, BELIEVE, CALL, SAVED plan of Romans 10:13-15. What is the problem?

JUST THIS, we *HAVE* implemented the above process, but they have not all obeyed the Gospel. It didn’t work (as Isaiah said).

To reinforce this apparent calamity, see John 12:37-43. “But though he had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on him. That the saying of Esaias the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spake, Lord, who hath

believed our report? and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed? Therefore they could not believe, because that Esaias said again, He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart; that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them. These things said Esaias, when he saw his glory, and spake of him. Nevertheless among the chief rulers also many believed on him; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue: For they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.”

It came to pass, “They SAW and HEARD but refused to believe.”

Actually the Scripture says that they did indeed believe (FAITH COMES BY HEARING) but because they did not want to face expulsion from the Synagogue and because they valued the praise of men above the praise of God, they *CHOSE*, THEY *CHOSE*, MADE A DECISION, NOT TO BELIEVE.

But, I thought they believed. Yes, they heard, they saw, but because of their hard hearts they *DECIDED AGAINST THEIR OWN FAITH*—

That, my friend, is *UNBELIEF*. Unbelief is a decision, a decision against your own FAITH.

Next verse, Romans 10:17, “SO THEN FAITH cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God, *BUT I SA Y, HAVE THEY NOT HEARD?*”

I’ve moved the period from verse 17 and included part of verse 18. Refer to your Bible and read it correctly in context, “So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God, but I say, Have they not heard?” YES THEY DID.

THEN what’s the problem? If they heard, they should have FAITH, because faith comes by hearing.

“But I say, have they not heard? Yes verily (truly), their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world.

“But I say, Did not Israel know? First Moses saith, I will provoke you to jealousy by them that are no people, and by a foolish nation I will anger you.

“But Esaias is very bold, and saith, I was found of them that sought me not; I was made manifest unto them that asked not after me.” (Romans 10:18-20)

Chapter eleven of Romans continues to speak of the unbelief of Israel, but for right now I want to turn to Luke 4:24.

We just read from Romans that the prophecy said that God would provoke His people to jealousy, that He would be found of them that sought Him NOT. This was due to unbelief.

In Luke 4 Jesus comes to the synagogue and announces himself as anointed of God. The result was that the people refused Him and wanted to throw Him off

of a cliff.

Let's pick Him up in Luke 4:24. "Verily I say unto you, No prophet is accepted in his own country. But I tell you of a truth, *many widows* were in Israel in the days of Elias, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, when great famine was throughout all the land."

Jesus is referring to Elijah, of course. After he told King Ahab of the coming drought and famine, God instructed him to stay at a brook to be sustained by ravens and the brook.

When the brook dried up, God instructed Elijah to go to Zarephath of Zidon and there a widow woman would sustain him. He obeyed and went and found the woman gathering sticks.

In conversation he learned that she was planning to use her last meal and oil to make a cake for herself and her son, and then after that, starvation and death was anticipated.

Elijah instructed her to do as she planned, but to give the cake to *him* first.

SHE OBEYED.

The result was that her meal never ran out, neither did her oil. She moved in faith, according to the word of the prophet, and God gave her a miracle.

Now, how many widows were in Israel in the time of Elijah? MANY!

But to how many was Elijah sent?

Before you answer, read the next verse (Luke 4:26). "But unto **none** of them was ELIAS sent." The widow woman that he was sent to was a **heathen** woman, a Gentile dog. Yes, there were many widows in Israel, but none of those received the miracle of this heathen.

"I was found of them that sought me NOT." "But I say, did not Israel know?" They knew, they heard the word, but made a decision against God.

If Elijah would have gone to an Israeli widow she, most probably, would have run him off and said, "I know you, you are one of those preachers; you're not getting my last meal." Israel knew but wouldn't believe.

Jesus continues in Luke 4:27, "And many lepers were in Israel in the time of Eliseus the prophet; and none of them was cleansed, saving Naaman the Syrian."

This is a similar example. There were many lepers in Israel, but NONE of them were healed. But a HEATHEN man came into the country and received healing from leprosy. This speaks to shame their faith.

Is it any different today? How many sick people are there in the church of today? Many; but how many are getting healed? Most healings are being received by people outside of the church, people on the street, lost people or

newly born-again Christians. Baby Christians seem to receive more miracles than the old timers. WHY? They are willing to move on their faith, not that they need *much* faith; the call is to ACT on the faith that you have. It only requires a mustard seed's worth.

Naaman came seeking healing and he got it. He came close to missing it as the Israeli lepers had done. His instructions were to dip seven times in the Jordan. He refused to do it at first because he had cleaner water in his own country, but then decided to OBEY at the admonition of a servant. The simple ACT of obedience to the word that was heard brought his healing.

Many lepers were in Israel, but **none** were healed except this heathen man.

Didn't Israel know? Yes, they heard the word preached. Did they have faith, since faith comes by hearing the word? Evidently they did, but without *actions* faith is dead.

After God brought His people out of Egypt through the Red Sea, He kept them at Mt. Sinai for almost a year to instruct them. There God introduced himself to them by giving them the ten commandments, showing them fire and smoke, instituting the priesthood, blood sacrifices, tabernacle, etc., etc., etc.

DID Israel know? Yes, verily, they heard, but when God led them to the promised land of milk and honey, they had a change of mind.

They spied out the land, took careful inventory of the promise, and then made their *DECISION* by a 10 to 2 vote, "NO, we are NOT GOING to go IN."

Caleb said, "But we are well able to take the land, for God is with us. Let's go in."

That statement almost got him stoned. The people *PROVOKED* God by deciding negatively, in fact it is called in Hebrews 3:8, "THE PROVOCATION," when they "tempted God" and provoked Him.

God's people proclaimed loudly, "Let us make another captain; let's run the preacher off and go back to our RELIGION."

The people wanted to go back to Egypt where they could smell the fleshpots, onions, leeks, garlic and cucumbers. FAMILIAR territory. No one wants to be disturbed, but if you want the full things of God, your religion *will* be disturbed.

Some ministers report as a defense for not allowing God to move into their churches, "This Holy Spirit baptism and tongues is very *DIVISIVE*."

Sure they are. The Holy Spirit has ruined many good so-called "*CHURCHES*." He will destroy your religion, BUT give you life in abundance.

DID NOT ISRAEL KNOW? Sure they did, but decided to go back to Egypt. Except they would never get back there, they would die in the desert.

Folks, you cannot go back. There is NO way BACK. The Red Sea is closed. Live the rest of your life in the hot, dry wilderness of sin.

After they hesitated to go into the promise by faith and found out they could not go back to Egypt but only die in the wilderness, they then made a half-hearted decision in desperation to go in, on second thought.

Moses warned, “DON’T go in, God is not with you.” HESITATION is the manifestation of a composite of FEAR and UNBELIEF.

“THINK LONG and you THINK WRONG.”

“HESITATION will lead to FRUSTRATION, EXASPERATION, then DESPERATION.” If you move in desperation (if it’s at this point) you will move into annihilation.

How often have we seen the NEW, JUST BORN, BABY Christian receive the miracle when at the same time the older Christian who has been sitting in church for 50 years looks on in amazement and many times in prideful jealousy.

The reason is this: the new Christian who has not really heard much Word will *MOVE* quicker than the person who has heard the Word all of his life. There are exceptions, of course, but we find it easier to get a miracle in the life of a new believer than in an old gospel-hardened one.

I would like to cite two testimonies of people who dared to move on God’s Word. One case was of new believers and the other was a long time pastor who was snared by denominational teaching, yet his heart was not hardened but tender.

The first is the case of a retired couple in South Louisiana. He was 70 and she was 65 years of age.

One day I received a call from this lady whom I did not know nor had ever met. She explained that she had tried to call other ministers in our fellowship but couldn’t reach them, so she called me.

Her request was that I come to the hospital and pray for her husband, who was having severe abdominal problems and was presently being checked and tested by physicians to obtain a concrete diagnosis.

Moments later, as I walked into his hospital room, I saw the man who was unknown to me lying in obvious pain amid all the proper apparatuses.

He made it clear that he wanted me to lay hands on him and pray the prayer of faith and that he would receive his healing.

I asked, “Do you know *how* to receive your healing? CAN you receive your healing right now?”

He answered, “Yes, Sir, just lay your hands on me and pray and I will receive

my healing.”

THAT I did with a very simple prayer.

My visit was short, although I found out that they had only recently received Jesus into their lives and had been baptized in the Holy Ghost after spending all of their life up to that time in the Roman Catholic church. In South Louisiana we have a heavy population of strict Catholics, even as I was raised. As Catholics we were not told to read the Bible, so we didn't. Consequently we were in doubt (ignorance) of what the Bible said, NOT particularly in unbelief. We had not really heard the Word, just done our duty.

It is really refreshing to deal with newly born- again people who will believe God's Word to the point of ACTING on it.

An older Christian many times will know enough of the Word to *argue* with you and will never move in faith.

Nevertheless, after the tests were run, this couple was sent home to await the results. The lady called me a couple of days later and reported what had transpired.

She said, “The doctor called me and said that my husband's gall bladder was full of gallstones and that immediate surgery was necessary.”

She told me that she replied, “Doctor, I don't believe you!”

Being taken back a bit, the doctor asked, “What makes you say this? Why are you talking this way?”

She said, “We have chosen to believe God. Brother Martin prayed and laid hands, so we believe that my husband is healed. We are not coming in for surgery.”

The doctor immediately warned, “Mrs. Cormier, your husband is in serious condition; his gall bladder is liable to rupture and that would mean he would die. If you don't bring him in he might die.”

She replied, “Then he'll just have to die, because I'm not bringing him in.”

She later wrote me a letter of testimony of the results. Here is an excerpt from that letter, dated September 9th, 1976:

*. . . My husband is in fine health, never had a pain since you prayed for his healing. God answered your request for dissolving the gallstones he had in his gall bladder. We plainly saw the results; he passed those stones for three days, three or four times per day, each time it was about two hands full, like raw grits, something just as black as charcoal.*

*I told him, “That old devil is making his getaway from your body, Honey.”*

*My husband said, "Amen, that old devil knows he's got to get out of me for I am God's property, and he can't touch me any more."*

*Praise God, for He is Almighty, Brother Martin. With God everything is possible. Oh Praise the Lord I just love to say, "With God everything is possible," for everytime I say it I feel God's Holy Spirit all over me and I love that feeling . . .*

*Lovingly yours in Christ,*

*Mrs. Gaston Cormier*

*Rt. 1, Box 314*

*Duson, La. 70529*

Now, at this point, I'm going to use the preceding to say something very important to those who are in places of responsibility in God's ministry.

Mr. Cormier did not get the results fully until **AFTER** they called the doctor a liar. It was **after** they heard the bad report that they had **another decision to make**.

Anybody can call for someone to pray the prayer of faith, but what are you going to do when the following decisions come?

Many pastors are tempted to "protect" their people by **warning** them NOT to step out too quickly, too fast.

They are scared that their people will get hurt. They are what? SCARED! Once more, we cannot afford to operate in fear. You will receive what you fear.

If I had warned this couple when she told me that she called the doctor a liar, I would have blocked them from going into miracle land.

What would a sensible decision be? Go and get operated on? Have surgery instead of a miracle? Yes, that would be sensible, but we are called to walk by FAITH, NOT SENSE.

Folks, there is no need to encourage anyone to go to the doctor, have surgery, buy insurance, and borrow money. They are already trained to do that. You don't have to tell them. Most church members will run there *before* they call for prayer.

"But," you say, "they might sink!" Well, if they do, they will just be another WET-WATER- WALKER. But remember, Peter was the only one of the bunch who got to walk back to the boat with Jesus. What a privilege!

I was asked by a concerned minister, "Brother Martin, isn't there a DANGER in this faith message of throwing medicine away and not going to doctors?" He continued, "Shouldn't we have a BALANCE?"



These are good questions and they come up all the time. (I wonder who instigates these questions?)

Let's return to our "ensamples." Yes, there were giants (DANGERS) in the promised land, but that is where the milk and honey were flowing.

The faith message is only for those who want to live in miracle land. If you are afraid of the giants, (hen stay in the desert; but please, don't go around preaching a message that is designed to keep people in the desert and forbidding them to go in to war with the giants just because you are scared or you fear some may sink.

If you preach a wilderness message, then my friend, you don't have a message.

Oh, you might have an *argument*, but it is anti- Christ. Any time you convince people not to go into their promised land of miracles, you are against God's design.

NOW, how about **BALANCE**. My answer is this, "You can **balance** yourself completely **out** of miracle land."

It all depends on what you mean when you say, **balance**. MOST of the time the word **BALANCE** is a substitute for the word **COMPROMISE**, OR, if you don't mind, **UNBELIEF**.

NOW, don't write me off, yet.

Personally, I don't go around telling everyone to throw away their medicine, cancel their insurance, and quit their doctor. That would not necessarily work, but I preach a message that not only **ALLOWS** them to do these things but even **encourages** them to do so. I take the limits off and they can go as far as they want to.

Now when one comes to me and tells me of the decision **they have already made**, don't expect me to *DISCOURAGE* them and *WARN* them of all the pitfalls—Don't you know that they have already been through that? That's what they have been doing all of their life. Why should we rehearse that again? Now, since they have finally come to the place where they want to jump in and trust God's

Word, I'm going to **agree** with them, encourage them and support them.

Even if it came to the point that they are willing to step out in an area that I at the time would refuse to, I still would have no right to hold them back on account of my foot-dragging.

I cannot be jealous if someone's faith out-produces mine. "More power to 'em. Go get 'em!"

The Bible says, “Rejoice with those that rejoice.”

Mr. Cormier *never* returned to the hospital and at this writing almost three years have passed.

Mrs. Cormier was later attacked with what she felt were kidney stones. She came in, told me of the situation, declared that she was going to receive a miracle and asked for prayer. My brother and I promptly prayed for her and she did in fact receive her miracle.

It has been my pleasure to watch this couple continue to move in faith and refuse to stop in unbelief. They are living in the land of rest. Now in their retirement years, they are enjoying life more than they ever have. Thanks be to God.

The other testimony that I want to refer to is to that of a pastor friend from another part of the country.

He was suffering from diabetes for 14 years, to the point that he took four shots of special insulin every day, he was losing his sight, having a hard time remembering, getting fatter and fatter, and fell deeply into despair. He had often contemplated suicide.

He conferred with a conclave of pastors of his own pentecostal church and received the reply that he could not expect to be healed because this disease was a hereditary disease and God delivers unto the third generation the iniquities of the parents. A hopeless situation.

But he was not satisfied.

I was periodically going into his state preaching the faith message. One of his denomination’s pastors began to attend my meetings. Afterwards this young pastor was invited to speak in his church. When he heard the message, he asked, “Are you telling me that I can be healed?”

The reply was, “Yes.”

He said, “Then *tonight* I will receive my healing from God.”

At 2 A.M. when he awoke for his regular shot, he refused to take it, and has never taken another.

That was 2<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> years ago. He moved in on the promise and possessed it. He had stood outside long enough in doubt (not knowing for sure).

He decided to brave the giants in order to possess the land. FAITH MOVES.

Some folks would rather meditate on and talk about the cases where people tried and failed. DON’T DO IT. That will only build your fear, not **your** faith.

I encourage you to hear what God speaks to you and do it.

So then faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the word of God, but I say,

*“Have they not heard?”*

### **Chapter 3: Unbelief is Insubordination**

To better comprehend the meaning of the word UNBELIEF” I will use this chapter to bring us into a brief WORD study.

In Greek, in order to negate a word, we simply add the letter “A” to the beginning of the word. Example:

FAITH = PISTIS

Add “A”: APISTIA means NO FAITH

The negative comes by the prefix “A.”

In our present study, we see that the word “PEITHETA” means PERSUADED. But add the prefix “A” and we have APEITHETA, which means unpersuadable.

Remember that APISTIA is not unbelief. *APEITHETA* is unbelief. Apistia is a lack of faith. Notice the demon possessed boy’s father as he told Jesus, “Lord, I believe, help thou my unbelief” (APISTIA). He actually did believe, although he did not have much faith. He used the little faith that he had and that was enough.

APEITHETA is the word for unbelief in the Bible. Other English words that help describe its meaning are these:

OBSTINATE

REBELLIOUS

OBEY-NOT

TO WILLFULLY & PERVERSELY DISBELIEVE

DISOBEDIENT

RESISTING AUTHORITY

INSUBORDINATE

This last word, *insubordinate*, catches my attention because through this word the meaning gains clarity.

Years ago I was on the executive board of a labor union local. Whenever management had problems with a union worker, one of the most often charges levied against him was “INSUBORDINATION.” The reason or act for the charge could be varied and manifold, such as sleeping on the job, loafing, tardiness, absent without notification, unwilling to obey orders, etc.

Insubordination was a favorite charge because whenever this charge would be supported by a federal arbitrator, the obvious penalty was permanent dismissal.

There is NO question of the punishment for insubordination. NO court in the land could uphold a person who is proven guilty of insubordination. He is of NO value.

Yet this is the sin that the Bible continually reminds us of and today's church just goes on its merry way in every kind of UNBELIEF (insubordination) and actually thinks that God will wink at it.

"To him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin," James 4:17.

"Jesus said unto them, If ye were blind, ye should have no sin: but now ye say, we see; therefore your sin remaineth," John 9:41.

Jesus did not condemn the lost sinner. The only people He was rough with were the leaders and people *who knew better*.

Unbelief is the sin of those that see, of those that have heard, of those that are responsible.

We are responsible—to do the thing that we've heard.

## THE “BUT” CHRISTIANS

Many Christians will say, “Oh, I know Romans 13:8 says to owe no man anything but to love one another . . . BUT!”

“Oh, yes, I know the Bible says that we are healed . . . BUT.”

“Yes, the Word says Jesus became poor that we might be rich . . . BUT.”

“For he hath made him to be sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him .

. . . BUT.”

“BUT” means to erase everything I just said. “Negate my previous statement.”

“Yes, Joe and Mary are so sweet. They love the Lord. Oh, I appreciate them so much . . . BUT.”

After “BUT” we really speak our heart.

“This is what I think.”

“THIS is how I believe it.”

“Yes, I know what God said, BUT I . . .”

Psalm 91 says that God’s angels protect me. BUT . . . “Keep up that insurance policy.”

You might say that you have faith. Surely you do. “But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?” James 2:20.

This word *dead* in the Greek has a meaning of *idleness*.

Faith without actions is idle. You have faith, because faith comes by hearing the Word of God; but without correct action it is no good, idle. If your car only idled it would not be much good. The Bible says that a husband who doesn’t work is no good (worse than an infidel).

The wife of one of these husbands may say, “Yes, I have a husband. There he is, sitting in his lazy boy chair. See him sleep. Sure I have a husband, but he doesn’t work.”

So it is with faith; you have faith, but if it will not work it is of no value.

What do we mean by work? We mean to act; to ACT on the Word that you know. Faith is—“Acting like God told you the truth.” You become an actor, acting out the Word of God.

Since the Word says that you are healed, then **ACT HEALED**.

Suppose your head is attacked with all sorts of sneezing, dripping, stoppage, redness, etc. Your friend or family advises you of the best medication and encourages you to do something about your condition. You reply, “What

condition?”

Then you are warned to be sensible and take care of your condition.

The simplest way to handle this is to say, “Look, I know what you see, and I see what you see, but if you don’t mind . . . I’M ONLY ACTING.”

ACTING?

“Yes, I am acting like God told me THE TRUTH. Faith without actions is dead, so I’m acting my faith in God’s Word that by Jesus’ stripes I was healed. His Word is medicine to my flesh.”

Let’s accept the fact that we must act. If we refuse to ACT on the Word that we have heard, it is unbelief, insubordination, disobedience.

Now think about the list we must act on.

SAVED? Then act saved.

HEALED? Then act healed.

RICH? Then act rich.

OWE NO MAN ANYTHING? Protected by angels? More than a conqueror? Have the love of God shed abroad in your heart? FREE? DELIVERED? You have a lot of acting to do, so get busy.

Blessings, goodness, and mercy cannot follow you if you’re not moving.

DO what you would do if you knew the Bible was true. God loves it.

Get out of the boat. In the boat you are responsible, but out of the boat you are God’s responsibility. God is not responsible until you get out on His Word.

## Chapter 4: Causes Hardness of Heart

DULLED SPIRITUAL PERCEPTION is the general meaning of “hardness of heart.” This condition is developed by a person who continues to hear the Word, but makes no effort to do the Word. Every time you say, “NO” to God, your heart gets a little harder. Some of the meanest people you may meet could be *HARDENED CHRISTIANS*. This will become evident as we continue to study this subject.

In chapters three and four of Hebrews, there is a warning set forth for us. Let's examine it.

“Harden not your hearts.” Hebrews 3:8.

The warning was to *not* follow the example of the Hebrews who refused to enter into the promised land. They caused God to swear that they shall not enter into His rest.

Verses 12-13 says, “Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an **EVIL HEART OF UNBELIEF** in departing from the living God. But exhort one another daily, while it is called today, lest any of you be **HARDENED . . .**” Verse 15, “Today, if ye will hear his voice, **HARDEN NOT YOUR HEARTS.**”

How does one harden his heart? By NOT entering into His promised rest that is preached.

At this point many Christians will say, “Oh, I’m not hardening my heart, I don’t have an evil heart of unbelief, BUT (THERE’S THAT WORD AGAIN) I think God wants us to use our common sense and continue to use man’s ways. You know God GAVE us WISDOM.”

I dare you to read Jeremiah 17:5 to God and tell Him you don’t believe it.

“Thus saith the Lord; Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord.”

Hold on to man’s ways if you want to, but be advised what is ahead for you.

You’ve heard too much, if you go back you are still responsible.

“So we see that they could not enter in because of UNBELIEF.” Hebrews 3:19. In many translations this word is DISOBEDIENCE.

Now chapter four continues: “Let us therefore fear (flee in terror of any thought that we might NOT receive any promise of God), lest a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it. *For unto us was the gospel preached . . .*”

FOR UNTO US WAS THE GOSPEL  
PREACHED.



FOR UNTO US WAS THE GOSPEL  
PREACHED.

FOR UNTO US WAS THE GOSPEL  
PREACHED.

THAT MAKES us responsible, and if we refuse to move on what we have heard preached, that is unbelief and will harden our hearts.

The WORD will harden your heart. Now that sounds strange, “the *WORD* HARDENS HEARTS?” YES, if you continue to hear with no actions.

“For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it,” Hebrews 4:2. The Word must be MIXED with FAITH (ACTIONS).

Look at the positive confession that is made in verse three, “For we which have believed do enter . . .” “We do enter.”

Say it for yourself, “Yes, I DO ENTER. Look lather, I’M ACTING; I believe your Word, I’M ENTERING.”

Let’s not fall after the same example of unbelief.

## PAUL HARDENED HEARTS

Yes, Paul was going around hardening hearts. His plan, of course, was to make believers by preaching God's Word, but as he preached, not all believed. Those who would not be persuaded were hardened. He continued this until all Asia *heard* the Word of God. Not all **believed**, but all **HEARD**. That made them responsible.

Read it in Acts 19:8-10: "And he went into the synagogue, and spake boldly for the space of three months, disputing and persuading the things concerning the kingdom of God. But when divers were HARDENED, and believed not, but spake evil of that way before the multitude, he departed from them, and separated the disciples, disputing daily in the school of one Tyrannus. And this continued by the space of two years; so that all they which dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks."

Have you heard the Word? Then you are responsible. I'm writing to the Christian: harden not your heart.

## STEPHEN'S INVITATION

In Acts seven, after Stephen preached, he ended with this closing, "Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye."

The following is how these hardhearted Jews responded: "When they *heard* these things, they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed on him with their teeth."

What kind of person would do such a thing? He is a religious person who had heard the Word, lull didn't want to do it. These were JEWS, God's chosen people. But they were hardened.

They did not stop there, as Stephen continued to speak, "I see Jesus," they cried out with a loud voice, and stopped their ears, and ran upon him, cast him out of the city and stoned him; and Saul approved this. Don't you know that Saul's heart was hardening until Jesus finally blinded him on the Damascus Road?

Paul said, "I was not *disobedient* to the vision." He finally came into FAITH and started acting for God instead of against God. But I believe that this VISION was going to be Paul's last chance to repent. God had to strike him down with a ball of fire. Some folks brag about seeing a light like Paul. That really shows how set they were in their rebellious ways. It's better to respond to the gentle tugs. HEED the TAPS and avoid the RAPS.

## THE UNBELIEVING JEWS

Many times in the Book of Acts, the Bible refers to the *unbelieving Jews*. According to what we have learned in this study, this term is identifying a people chosen of God, who had been educated in the things of God, who were the people responsible for the preservation of God's Word and actually were the ones who should have known God.

Yet these people were **UNBELIEVING**. In Acts 14:2, "But the unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles, and made their minds evil affected against the brethren."

Acts 13:50, "But the Jews stirred up the devout and honorable women."

It was the Judaizers that were the thorn in Paul's flesh. They were the ones trying to destroy all of the churches that he started (the reason for the letter to the Galatians).

The unbelieving Jews were so set against Jesus that when Jesus healed the blind man in John 9, they would not believe it. The man was brought before the council with his perfect sight and they refused to believe him.

John 9:18,19—"But the Jews did not believe concerning him, that he had been blind, and received his sight, until they called the parents of him that had received his sight. And they asked them, saying, Is this your son, who ye say was born blind? how then doth he now see?"

They would not believe the blind man who was healed, nor his parents. They asked, "Is this your son who *you say* was born blind?"

Unbelief will do some terrible things to you when it has hardened your heart. It means to be spiritually hard of hearing, or to have dulled spiritual perception. There remains little capacity to believe. Your enthusiasm drains. You might go to church and read the Bible but it seems you just don't get anything out of it any more.

These are symptoms that your heart is beginning to callous. You are slowing down, not believing for too much now, relying on your experience.

This is what happened to King Asa after a 39 year reign. In II Chronicles 16:12—" . . . yet in his disease he sought not to the Lord, but to the physicians . . . and he died."

## **Chapter 5: Destroyed Without Remedy**

What a solemn warning we find in Proverbs 29:1, “He that being often reproved hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy.”

I’ve mentioned previously that God’s *Word* hardens hearts. Actually it is not directly the Word that hardens, but the Word that reprove, teaches, instructs, corrects, and chastises. The negative decision to that Word is what causes hardness.

We can see this hardness that developed in Pharaoh’s life as he heard the Word of God and continued to say, “NO” to that Word.

In Exodus seven God told Moses that he (Moses) would be a god to Pharaoh. Moses was to relay God’s Word to Pharaoh through Aaron, and Pharaoh would *NOT HEARKEN*.

Every time Pharaoh would not hearken, his heart would become harder. This happened ten times in all.

It started with Aaron’s rod turning into a serpent and then swallowing all of the magicians’ serpents.

“And he hardened Pharaoh’s heart, that he hearkened not unto them; as the Lord had said. And the Lord said unto Moses, Pharaoh’s heart is hardened, he refuseth to let the people go.” Exodus 7:13,14.

Then came other of God’s judgments and sayings—the water turned into blood, the frogs, the lice. Then the magicians warned Pharaoh, “This is the finger of God.” (Exodus 8:19). “. . . and Pharaoh’s heart was hardened, and he hearkened not unto them; as the Lord had said.”

Again the word came, “Let my people go.”

As signs of credentials for the word, there came the flies, the murrain on the livestock, the boils, the hail, the locusts, and finally the death of the firstborn in every family.

This last plague caused Pharaoh to let the people go. (Exodus 12:31-32)

Later as the Israelites were leaving, Pharaoh asked, “Why have we let Israel go from serving us?” He changed his mind, went against his decision to obey God’s Word, and went to kill all of them.

As we already know, Egypt was suddenly destroyed and that without remedy in the Red Sea.

Yes, he that is often reproved and hardens his neck shall be suddenly destroyed and without remedy.

When does this cut-off point come?

Where is the point of no-return?

The Bible does not answer those questions, but it does give us examples of people who have reached that point.

Take for example, Ananias and Sapphira in Acts five. You know the story, how they lied to Peter (actually the Holy Ghost) about the money that they received for their property.

You might wonder why or *how* could anyone lie to the Holy Ghost?

The answer is simple . . . “PRACTICE.” As one fears God, he will remain honest before Him. But once he lies, it will be easier for him to lie again. As he continues to lie, his heart gets harder, and harder, and lying becomes easier and easier. Soon it’s nothing at all to lie to God. That’s a hard heart. A Christian can get so calloused that he can do anything without hurting his conscience. They feel God does not care or even *KNOW* what they are doing.

I heard one preacher tell how he stopped to pray for a drunk man who was asleep in the gutter early one morning. After waking the man and getting permission to pray for him, he prayed thus: “Lord, You see this man, that he is drunk . . . The drunk man immediately interrupted his prayer and said, “Oh, don’t tell Him I’m drunk, tell Him I’m sick.”

This is not only a funny story, but the truth in many Christians’ lives.

They think that God is not looking or is too feeble to notice what they are doing.

What happens to hard hearts? They get destroyed without remedy. That is what happened to Ananias and Sapphira. They buried them.

I know that this is not a very comforting message, but it is a very needful warning.

In all of this I’m NOT saying that God is going around killing people, but that when Christians continually hear the Word without doing it, they are getting hard hearted. I don’t even know if Ananias and Sapphira were born again or not.

It always bothered me when I’d read that “God hardened Pharaoh’s heart.” I would ask in my mind, “God, why do you do that?” I would think, “I don’t like to read that.”

I didn’t know what to do with it because I believed that God was a good God; all good gifts come from our Heavenly Father.

But it’s not really God’s fault when people turn away from His Word. He is a Holy God and cannot put up with insubordination. God has given us a free will and He holds to His promise, “Whatever we allow on earth, He allows.”

In the first chapter of Romans, we read, “For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness; Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse: Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things. Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves: Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen. For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature: And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompence of their error which was meet. And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient.” Romans 1:18-28.

God has no choice but to give you up to your own rebellion.

“Esau . . . . was rejected: for he found no place of repentance (or no way to change his mind), though he sought it carefully with tears.” Hebrews 12:17.

Judas repented but it did no good, so he hung himself.

And then we see Peter repenting and being restored by Jesus.

It’s all in God’s hands. He alone knows the hearts of men.

My intention here is *not* to produce fear and condemnation. God’s Word does not condemn you; the devil condemns you, and I’m not the devil.

The purpose of this message is to identify unbelief so that we can recognize it and kill it in our own lives.

This message is serving as a good check in my own faith life. I must move according to the Word that I have heard. If I don’t, it is unbelief and I will reap the results.

## **Chapter 6: Symptoms In Today's Church**

**BIBLE BELT . . . BURNED OVER FIELDS.**

**. PREACHERS' GRAVEYARDS . . . GOSPEL HARDENED.**

These are terms that may or may not be familiar to you, depending upon where you are from and where you've been.

As a young Christian I didn't know of the term "BIBLE BELT," as I was raised in a totally Roman Catholic situation in South Louisiana that was skipped by the Bible Belt.

As a matter of fact, there was never a Bible kept in our home when I was growing up and I didn't know exactly what the Bible was for, as we were only interested in fulfilling our church obligations, reading our missals, and saying our rosary, etc.

We thought Southern Baptists were "Holy Rollers" when they first came into my hometown of Baldwin to preach the Gospel. Nevertheless, my hat is off to the Southern Baptists because I was saved as a result of the Gospel coming to my hometown.

Later, as I began to learn of church history, I heard of the Bible Belt, which stretches from the east coast of Georgia and the Carolinas, moving through Alabama, Mississippi, Tennessee, Arkansas, *Northern* Louisiana, and going into Texas and Oklahoma. That general area seems to be where the Bible has been preached quite extensively.

I also noticed a different atmosphere or attitude of the Bible Belt churches and that of the mission churches. Our Director of Missions for Louisiana Baptists always commented on this when he would conduct their annual bus tour of mission churches. His one desire upon retirement was to move down and become a member of a mission church and live in that atmosphere, which he did later.

I continued to notice this situation, but didn't know *why* it was so or what caused it.

Then I heard preachers talking about "BURNED OVER FIELDS." I questioned, "What is that?"

The answer was that this was the area that had been preached to so much that there was very little response left in those areas. The people were burned out. Enthusiasm to the Gospel had weaned. It was dry country for preachers. In fact, it seemed that the people had heard "TOO MUCH" Gospel. BURNED OVER FIELDS.



How can anyone hear too much Gospel? Is that possible? How does one become Gospel hardened?

I taught seminars in some of these so-called Bible Belt cities for local pastors, and they further explained to me their dilemma in their burned over fields. One pastor told me that his city was known as the “Preachers’ Graveyard.” He said that more preachers were destroyed and buried in that city than anywhere else, and it was due to the hardness of the people.

I continued to see this situation, but wondered, why?

I heard new preachers coming on the scene. They continually “dogged” and “drowned” and ridiculed the old Pentecostal, Full Gospel, and Baptist churches for their unbelief and unscriptural religious notions.

As I continued to look and learn of this situation, I had to come to the long hesitated point of agreement that there is more unbelief in the old Gospel churches than there is in the churches that had never heard the Gospel.

The reason? Simply, unbelief never comes **before** but only **after** the Word is preached. The condition **before** is *doubt* and *ignorance*.

In our most recent history as the charismatic renewal swept through the Catholic church, as well as other old churches, we found a very fertile field.

We saw the Catholics (nuns and priests included) receiving Jesus Christ into their lives, being filled with the Holy Spirit, speaking in other tongues, laying hands on the sick with great results of healing being manifested.

Oh, what a death-blow to our religious pride. I remember so well that when I was saved I vehemently renounced the Catholic religion and grabbed onto the Baptist’s. I carefully guarded that wide line of demarkation.

Then I found myself wanting to follow the flow of God . . . But . . . God was moving among the Catholics, as well as every other unconventional place, such as motels, convention centers, homes, schools, beaches, church cafeterias, etc. What was I to do? Follow God? Or dry up?

But if I follow God I’ll have to eat crow. What’s the alternative? DRY UP?

I think I’ll eat crow. I want to follow God.

Folks, this is where the drying up process begins and the burned over fields develop and the preachers’ graveyards are established.

It is when God’s people get their feet so well planted in a denomination that they feel Utopia has finally arrived and there is NO more to get, NO better method and everyone is wrong, except us.

These same people will sit week after week and hear the Gospel preached from their pulpit and grow so accustomed to hearing it without reaching out to

do it, that they will gradually get Gospel-hardened.

This investigation seems to give us some clues to what has happened in the Bible Belt. Christians settled down to hearing the Gospel without continuing to advance in it. It has happened in all of our churches, whether they be Methodist, Baptist, or Pentecostal.

What about Charismatics? Do you notice a settling attitude in some of them already? No one is immune from the temptation to settle down, but we must resist it. We are *tent dwellers*, not *settlers*.

We must guard against unbelief as we would treat any deadly poison.

What is unbelief? It is a decision, after we've heard the Word—NOT to do the Word.

I've had people stand up in my teaching meetings and argue with words that I was quoting from the Bible, and these were Christians.

Have you ever explained to someone that God wanted to heal them and set them free from demonic oppression, only to have them retort back that it is God's will for them to be in their present condition?

Compare the attitude of the man on the street and the man in the religious system. Many times you can get a miracle quicker for the newly saved dooper, thief, drunk, or criminal than you can for the person who's been a Christian and church attender for 40 years.

Why? Hardened hearts.

Another observation that I made was this: some of the meanest people you can meet are dried up, hard hearted, Holy Ghost baptized Christians. (With whom was God grieved those 40 years?)

I had the experience of working with a Pentecostal brother when I was a nominal Baptist. I noticed we couldn't talk about the Lord except he wanted to straighten me up.

Finally I received the Baptism of the Holy Ghost, and thought surely he would be glad to hear the good news. His response was, "You might have received a spirit, but it is certainly not the Holy Spirit."

He also reminded me that my hair was too long to receive the Holy Spirit, and that without holiness no man should see God. At the same time he refused to shake hands with a fellow worker because of his black skin.

On numerous occasions I had to appear as a job steward with this same brother when the company charged him with sleeping on the job. He had more truth than many Christians, but he was hardened.

Another indication of Gospel-hardened hearts was when I noticed during the

re-appearing of a popular Black-hating segregationalist group a few years ago that some of their highest leaders were people who claimed to be life-long Christian leaders in their Gospel preaching churches and Christian oriented lodges.

Over and over I'd ask, "How can this be?"

Well, I'm convinced that unbelief is the answer. After looking at Ananias and Sapphira, Pharaoh, Judas, and Esau, and the real life examples that are with us, it is no more a mystery to me.

Now, you may ask, "Why all this 'dirty-linen' discussion?"

Well, my purpose is to expose the work of unbelief and to warn not only you but also myself of the constant dangers of slack in our Christian life. No one is immune to being tempted, but if we recognize the symptoms then we are able to take steps of prevention.

The strange thing about the condition of unbelief is this: You can be an active member of a good Gospel preaching church that has a real good Bible preaching PASTOR where many signs of "*GROWTH*" are evident—and in the midst of all of this, you can grow slothful and indifferent and dry up sitting in your pew.

This happens as you personally quit growing. Everything is going fine, no new challenges, you are satisfied with your spiritual stature.

But the problem is that you are still attending church and reading your Bible.

Is this bad?

I know it sounds strange to think this way, but there is a spiritual principle involved here. Attending church is good, and reading your Bible is good—But if you don't DO what the man preaches and you don't DO what you are reading—you are becoming HARDENED.

The Word is profitable for reproof and he that is often reproved and hardens his heart is suddenly cut off and that without remedy.

But why doesn't God do something?

He's doing all He can, but when a person is hardened he is spiritually hard of hearing and cannot respond to God any more because he can't hear God.

One day God spoke and the people that stood there thought it was only thunder. John 12:28-29, "Father, glorify thy name. Then came there a voice from heaven, saying, I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again. The people therefore, that stood by, and heard it, said that it thundered: others said, An angel spake to him."

One Sunday morning my wife and I were sitting in a church when there was a noise outside. My wife asked me if it had thundered. I replied, "I don't know;

maybe it was God speaking. What did it sound like to you?”

That’s an AWE-full thought, to think that I thought I heard thunder and it was God speaking.

Well, when you read that Bible, and when a man of God is speaking by the Spirit—**GOD IS SPEAKING.**

WHAT DO you hear?

God help us to hear and do.

Now in many of these so-called “BURNED OVER FIELDS” there had been a LACK of response to the faith message and hardening of the “old liners,” but here’s the good report: There is an awakening in these same cities. There is a move of God in these same areas. But it’s in a different people. God is raising up a new bunch, as He has done many times before.

It is your personal responsibility to stay in the flow. Find out where God is moving and move with Him. If your church body died, don’t die with it. Even RATS are smart enough to leave a sinking ship. Don’t let pride snare you. Don’t be so small that you cannot look outside of your denomination.

After I got saved, I left the Catholic church and joined the Baptist. I heard people say, “I’m a Baptist by choice because I think this is the best way.” I also heard people say, “I was born a Baptist and I’ll die a Baptist,” or interchange the word “Baptist” with “Catholic” or whatever.

But I found myself saying this, “Well, I left the Catholic church when I found something better, and I’m willing to leave the Baptist church if I ever find something better” (thinking all the while that there was nothing better). But I *DID* find something better.

Often I say, “This is the best thing I’ve ever seen” (speaking of my present situation). But while I say that I still hold to my original, “If I see something better, I’ll be willing to change again. I’m following God.”

That is what allowed me to go back and fellowship with Catholics, and that is what allows me now to flow wherever God is flowing.

I refuse to be proud, but I must remain CRITICAL—not to judge others but to walk CIRCUMSPECTLY and to know all the options that are available.

So, therefore, look around, see who is moving with God, who God is honoring, and get over there and learn something. (You might not know it all yet.)

I’ve found some pastors trapped in the old system and desiring to break out. That is commendable, but only initial. Not only must you desire, but you must make the break.

“But it hurts.” I agree.

“Maybe I can stay and transform my church.”

Yes, *MAYBE*, and then *MAYBE* you’ll dry up with them.

Oh, what a POTPOURRI of subjects we’ve touched on in this chapter.

God has the solution.

My only request is that you let these thoughts provoke you, then allow God to speak to your provoked, open, hungry heart. He will guide you, but not if you are settled. You have to be on your feet to be guided. My prayer is that I have helped you to get un-settled.

“GET ’em up, MOVE ’em out.”

## Chapter 7: Prays the Wrong Prayer

Unbelief prays the wrong prayer. In Luke 17:5 we see a prayer of the apostles. They were asking Jesus for more faith.

This seems to be a legitimate prayer. After all, it's in the Bible and the apostles prayed it.

Yes, that's all true, but the request is not Scriptural.

Jesus never did instruct us to pray for more faith. Faith is a gift of God all right, but it is received through hearing the Word. No short cuts. Jesus said in Mark 11:22, "HAVE THE FAITH of God."

Let's examine Jesus' reply (Luke 17:6). Jesus explains that their lack of faith was not their problem.

"If you had faith as a grain of MUSTARD seed, (AND SURELY YOU DO) ye might say unto this sycamine tree, (But you haven't) Be thou plucked up by the root, and be thou planted in the sea; and it should obey you." (But it can't obey you because you have not spoken to it.)

(Now why do you want more faith? Do you want to move something greater than a sycamine tree?)

Now I have all the above remarks in parenthesis to indicate the thoughts that the Greek is portraying here.

They were praying for more faith, but were not using the faith that they already possessed.

A little amount of faith has a lot of power and can perform great feats if it is put to work, but it has to be spoken and acted upon.

**MORE** faith will **NOT** help. Use what you already have.

Many Christians are waiting for more faith (and that is not entirely bad). But there comes a time when one must move on what he KNOWS to do.

"To him that knoweth to do good and doeth it NOT, to him it is sin," James 4:17.

There is a correct TIME to move. Moving too early can be discouraging and moving too late will be disastrous.

When you see it in God's Word, and you know what to do, hesitation is unbelief.

"If you think long, you'll think wrong."

That's what happened at the first promised land encounter. Israel decided *NOT* to go in, and then decided that they *would* when they heard that they would die in the wilderness; but Moses told them that it was too late.

This timing is real important.

Some folks today will say, “Yes, I see what Romans 13:8 says, but I have to increase my faith.” That’s good. Meditate on the Word, build your faith, but do not wait too long.

Another might say, “Yes, I should just trust God and throw my medicine away, but I need to meditate on the healing Scriptures some more.”

O.K. We agree. Nothing wrong with THAT.

**JUST DON’T OVERSTAY YOUR DEPARTURE TIME.**

When it’s time to move, it’s time to move. Any overstay will begin the hardening process.

When is this time? Only you know.

“Lord, increase my faith?”

The Lord might ask, “Why? Are you planning to do something?”

## Chapter 8: Unbeliefs Relief

What is our ultimate and continuing protection or immunity from unbelief? I would suggest:

1. NO COASTING
2. NO SETTLING

Everyone is tempted with the temptation to coast. Who doesn't like to coast for a while?

By that I mean this: You may have arrived at a point in your Christian life where everything is going well.

You have blown the mountains down, you've forded the rivers, you've conquered much territory, you've come a long way and God should be proud of you.

After all, we don't use medicine, doctors, insurance, or credit cards. All of the family members are well, we owe no man anything, finances are coming in sufficiently, our church is doing good, persecution has subsided; Whew, finally—let's take a breather . . . . Flop!!

You're COASTING!

"There's nothing to believe for, no new territory to take, we have arrived."

You're SETTLING!

There are no coasters and no settlers in God's army. When you are coasting, in which direction are you traveling? UP? OR DOWN? You can't coast up hill, for sure. Coasting only leads you downward.

We identify coasting as a period within which you are not believing for anything. During this time it is easy to slack off of faith and begin depending on natural resources.

There is, however, a sure-fire precaution you may implement when you discover that you may be in this danger. **"If you do not have a CRISIS, THEN MAKE ONE."**

Now that does not sound like good sense, but it works. Don't wait until a crisis comes that you have to face whether you want to or not; go ahead and create a situation in which you must depend upon God. This will help you to stay in God's Word and continue to look unto Him.

I'm not suggesting a bad crisis, but one wherein it would require God's help to obtain the answer.

For example, empty your bank account so that you'll have to "faith in" the groceries. That will keep you in an uphill climb.



Give your wardrobe away, or go out and order something that you have believed for, but the money has not come in yet.

These are only suggestions, of course, to explain my point; but they would indeed help you (if you need the help) to keep your attention focused on God.

One of our late great men of God surrendered his life to God's call while he was a successful Chicago businessman. He indeed wanted to live by faith, so to do so he disposed of everything except tickets to Africa for him and his family and helpers. When he arrived at Africa, he had to have a financial miracle simply to get off the boat and get into the country. God met his need as he stood in line. God used him mightily. God loves faith.

Secondly, some folks don't want to coast but they would like to settle.

No, there are no settlers in God's camp, only tent dwellers. Settlers collect things, and get tied down, but tent dwellers have to travel light.

You've heard the saying, "I'm but a stranger here, because heaven is my home."

Some Christians like to settle down in some comfortable pew on Sunday morning, listen to the preacher, give an offering, and keep everything nice and neat. They do not want to be challenged because that upsets them.

Settlers usually slow down, weaken, get fat and become useless, but pioneers and pilgrims remain strong, sharp and agile. They have to in order to stay alive. The FAITH life is an adventure. We have received our inheritance, now let us possess it.

Hebrews 10:38-39, "Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him. But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul."

Abraham was a stranger and a pilgrim and a father of faith. Read what the Bible said about him. Hebrews 11:8-16, "By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went. By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God. Through faith also Sara herself received strength to conceive seed, and was delivered of a child when she was past age, because she judged him faithful who had promised. Therefore sprang there even of one, and him as good as dead, so many as the stars of the sky in multitude, and as the sand which is by the sea shore innumerable. These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and

were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country. And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned. But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city.”

There is a story told about a tour group that planned to hike up to the top of a snowy mountain. All of them wanted to go all the way to the top.

After climbing halfway up, they stopped at a lodge to warm up, rest, and have some hot food and drink. Soon the leader summoned everyone to rise, put on their gear, and prepare to continue the trek to the top of the mountain.

Some folks changed their mind. After eating a nice lunch and being warmed by the log fire, they felt like their vantage point of the mountain view was quite sufficient as they pondered the long uphill icy climb to the very top of the mountain.

Now we have two groups instead of one. Group #1 went all the way up, and captured the adventures and breathless scenes of the whole mountain area. Group #2 stayed at the halfway house and slumbered out the day.

Notice that only one group made a decision. That was group #2.

Group #1 had no decision to make, because it was their initial plan to go all the way to the top. They only took a lunch break.

UNBELIEF is a DECISION. Only Group #2 made a decision.

Our first and only commitment should carry us all the way to the top with God. NO settlers, please. NO HALF-WAY HOUSES.

Here is one more story to firmly plant this into your heart.

There was a truck driver who had a truck loaded with live chickens in cages. He happened to be overloaded and had to cross a set of government scales.

He knew what to do, and pulled out his broomstick and proceeded to walk around his truck beating the sides of the trailer, in order to get all the chickens flying.

While all the chickens were fluttering and *UNSETTLED*, he drove across the scales and was well underweight.

This truck reminds me of the church with every one settled in. It is very heavy, everyone is adding his own weight. We need to rattle some cages and lighten up the church body.

Keep flapping, Folks; refuse to settle down.

## **Part Two**

## Chapter 9: The Severity of Unbelief

I have endeavored in *Part One* of this writing to identify unbelief so that we can recognize it when we see it. A correct diagnosis is one of the most important steps of any cure. If the problem is not correctly identified, recognized, isolated and dealt with, there can be no solution. The problem **cannot** be dealt with if unknown.

So, therefore, *Part One*, we believe, has sufficed to accomplish this and also suggest some solutions.

Now *Part Two* will be used to present a real Bible situation. This situation is a HISTORICAL EVENT, and is given for our ensample.

Our example comes from the life of King Saul and will reveal to us the sequel of events of unbelief.

We can take these events from the life of King Saul and apply to our own life.

We will list the sequel of events for clear identity and then discuss them one at a time. This *Part Two* is a teaching within itself and could be published separately, but I believe it will have its utmost effect if studied after the education of *Part One*, so here it is:

The Severity of Unbelief, shown by the Sequel of Events of Saul's Life.

- A. The CALL
- B. The TASK
- C. The FAILURE
- D. The REBUKE
- E. The EXCUSE
- F. The PENALTY

## A. THE CALL

The call comes, whether to Saul or to ourself. The call always comes.

Before we look at Saul's call, let's examine the types of calls that may come to us.

There is the General call, the Special call, and the Specific call.

The General Call comes to whosoever. (Romans 10:13) Whosoever will call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.

The Special Call comes to a person who has answered the general call. We might call this a call to special ministry, such as pastor, evangelist, or a call such as Saul received to be a KING.

Thirdly, the Specific Call may be a certain task. Now this call is specific to a certain job and may take one day, one week, or a year or more to accomplish, but after it is accomplished, it is finished.

The first two calls are for life, and the third is for a one-time job or task.

With each call comes the anointing and equipment that is supplied by God, the caller.

Before we see Saul's call, let's look at the historical situation surrounding it.

Israel had entered the land of promise and they were supposed to follow the leadership of the spiritual leaders, who were the priests after the death of their leader, Joshua.

There were men of war that replaced Joshua in battle, but there was no spiritual leader.

"And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord, and forgot the Lord their God, and served Baalim and the groves." Judges 3:7.

So the Lord raised up a deliverer for Israel. His name was OTHNIEL, a nephew of Caleb. We know Othniel as the first *judge*.

When the judge would die, the children of Israel were expected to keep God's law and follow the priesthood's example. But over and over they did evil in the sight of the Lord and every man did what seemed right in his own eyes.

Then they would cry unto the Lord and God would send another judge to lead them and straighten them up.

This cycle continued until the last judge appeared, who was the prophet Samuel. During Samuel's leadership the people loudly complained about the haphazard leadership and thought they could do better with a king to lead them.

This is when God agreed to give them a king, and the choice went to SAUL.

Samuel the prophet was instructed to anoint Saul as king over Israel.

“And when Samuel saw Saul, the Lord said unto him, Behold the man whom I spake to thee of! this same shall reign over my people.” (I Samuel 9:17).

This was the **Special Call** that went out to Saul.

“And Samuel said to all the people, See ye him whom the Lord hath chosen, that there is none like him among all the people? And all the people shouted, and said, God save the king.” (I Samuel 10:24).

After the Call came the anointing and equipment.

The anointing is seen in I Samuel 10:1. “Then Samuel took a vial of oil, and poured it upon his head, and kissed him, and said, Is it not because the Lord hath anointed thee to be captain over his inheritance?”

The equipment is seen in 10:6. “And the Spirit of the Lord will come upon thee, and thou shalt prophesy with them, and shalt be turned into another man.”

So therefore, we see that Saul received a **Special Call**, with the anointing of oil and the equipment of the Holy Spirit.

At this point, ask yourself, “Do I have a special call? Am I aware of a special call from God?”

## B. THE TASK

The task comes late in Saul's reign. Up to this time, Saul had disobeyed God many times. This seems to be the last chance to have the opportunity to obey God.

The task is stated in I Samuel 15:1-3. "Samuel also said unto Saul, The Lord sent me to anoint thee to be king over his people, over Israel: now therefore hearken thou unto the voice of the words of the Lord. Thus saith the Lord of hosts, I remember that which Amalek did to Israel, how he laid wait for him in the way, when he came up from Egypt. Now go and smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not; but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass."

The order was clear. Destroy the Amalekites off the face of the earth.

This seemed to be a hard order to follow, but it was God's order.

Many questions are raised as to *why* did God do such things.

We cannot judge God's actions by our common sense and rationalization.

The Amalekites were against God's people and no one does that and gets away with it. They would not allow Moses to pass through from Egypt to Canaan.

Zechariah 2:8 says, ".... for he that toucheth you toucheth the apple (pupil) of HIS eye." Touch not God's anointed.

This is where we are tempted to use our common sense. Yes, I know what God said, *But*. . . .

But what?

You've heard of the "BUT" Christians? We are supposed to be sheep, not billy goats. Only goats *Butt*.

Nevertheless, the task was delivered to King Saul, "Kill the Amalekites."

## C. THE FAILURE

“And he took Agag the king of the Amalekites alive.” (I Samuel 15:8a).

But didn't God instruct to destroy him? Verse nine says, “But Saul and the people spared Agag, and the best of the sheep, and of the oxen, and of the fatlings, and the lambs, and all that was good, and would not utterly destroy them: but everything that was vile and refuse, that they destroyed utterly.”

Obviously the failure came because of common sense. God had asked too much. After all, maybe this king could serve some kind of benefit. No use to destroy all of the perfectly good animals. There is no sense to that. God surely did not mean that. Why, we can sacrifice them.

The second opinion. The second word. That is where most people get into trouble.

God gives the word, then it is examined, interpreted, analyzed, opinionized, discussed, watered down, and finally changed. Worst part about it, everyone feels good about it.

Saul's failure was due to one thing, and it includes all of the foregoing. The one reason for failure is finally mentioned in verse 24, “Because I feared the people, and obeyed their voice.”

We are not called to obey people, but to obey God.

Proverbs 29:25 says, “The **fear of man** bringeth a snare . . .

When we give in to the fear of man, we are setting our own trap. Now the fear of man may *present* itself, (that's only the temptation) but we must not yield to that fear, because when we do, we are automatically turning our backs on God's Word.

You might argue that the above statement is not *necessarily* true all of the time. Well, you can be relatively safe with it. My pastor once said, “If you want to know which way God is going, just find out which way the world is going and go the opposite way.”

There is a lot of truth there and it is Scriptural when you consider what the Bible says about the world system. It opposes God.

So the fear of man caused Saul to fail. What may be the antidote?

Simply: Proverbs 1:7, “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge but fools despise wisdom and instruction.” Proverbs 9:10, “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the holy is understanding.”

A good personal study for any Christian would be a study on the FEAR OF THE LORD. Use a concordance and look up all of the Scripture in the Bible on



the fear of THE LORD. It will benefit you greatly.

We are discussing the failure. Have you failed to obey the call? If you have, then be assured of one thing, the rebuke is on its way, OR maybe it has already come. OR maybe this writing IS your rebuke. Nevertheless, God is faithful to bring the rebuke whenever there is a failure. You can expect it; the next step after the failure is the rebuke.

## D. THE REBUKE

God is full of grace and His mercy endureth forever.

The rebuke is NOT the end. “DO NOT faint when thou art rebuked of Him.”

The rebuke is to provoke us to answer. When the rebuke comes, we must give answer.

In our study of King Saul, the rebuke came by way of Samuel the prophet.

“Then came the word of the Lord unto Samuel, saying, It repenteth me that I have set up Saul to be king: for he is turned back from following me, and hath not performed my commandments. And it grieved Samuel; and he cried unto the Lord all night. And Samuel came to Saul: and Saul said unto him, Blessed be thou of the Lord: I have performed the commandment of the Lord.” (I Samuel 15:10,11,13).

The rebuke was given to Samuel in order for him to deliver it unto King Saul. It had not been spoken to King Saul as yet when we see the two men meet.

As the two men met, the first to speak was Saul, “Blessed be thou of the Lord: I have performed the commandment of the Lord.” King Saul actually felt that he had done exactly what God had said. He felt happy and secure in himself and as he saw Samuel, he blessed him.

Folks, this is the deceitfulness of sin. You can gradually get to the point where you can feel real good about yourself as you lead a *mediocre* life, thinking all along that God should feel lucky to have us carry His name.

“I have performed the commandment of the Lord,” while putting up with sickness, poverty and worry as bed partners.

The rebuke comes to those who have received a call and have not performed it.

Now let’s read God’s rebuke to Saul: “Then Samuel said unto Saul, Stay, and I will tell thee what the Lord hath said to me this night. And he said unto him, Say on. And Samuel said, When thou wast little in thine own sight, wast thou not made the head of the tribes of Israel, and the Lord anointed thee king over Israel? And the Lord sent thee on a journey, and said, Go and utterly destroy the sinners the Amalekites, and fight against them until they be consumed. Wherefore then didst thou not obey the voice of the Lord, but didst fly upon the spoil, and didst evil in the sight of the Lord?” (I Samuel 15:16-19).

Why did you not obey the voice of the Lord? This sets the scene for an answer. Naturally, when a question is asked, there is an answer that is expected. In this case, as in all rebukes from the Lord, there are TWO answers that are

possible:

1— GUILTY AS CHARGED

2— MY EXCUSE

Which one will you offer?

I John 1:9 states that if we confess our sins, God will forgive us. That word **“confess”** means to **identify ourselves with**. In other words, we own up to the thing that we are guilty of. If we do this, then God can and will forgive.

BUT, if we refuse to confess and offer an excuse why we did such a thing, then God cannot forgive.

Therefore our next point is the most important —THE EXCUSE.

## E. THE EXCUSE

When we are found out, we must either confess or offer an excuse. In the case under study, King Saul chose to offer the excuse.

When Saul first exclaimed, “I have performed the commandment of the Lord,” Samuel answered, “What meaneth then this bleating of the sheep in mine ears, and the lowing of oxen which I hear?”

Since God said to kill all of the oxen, sheep, camels and asses, and you have kept His word, what do I hear?

“Oh, that.”

“Yes, the sheep and oxen.”

“That is a good question, Samuel, and you deserve a good answer. Yes, I can explain that.”

Brace yourself, God, here comes the **explanation**.

God has a special way of asking questions that require answers.

“Adam, where art thou?”

“Who told thee that thou wast naked?”

“HAST THOU EATEN of the tree?”

“EVE, what is this that thou hast done?”

“Cain, where is Abel, thy brother? What hast thou done, the voice of thy brother’s blood crieth unto me from the ground?”

Now God knew the answers to all of these questions (NOTHING is hidden from Him), but He was giving opportunity for confession.

Remember Adam’s reply: “The **woman** gave me to eat.”

“As a matter of fact, God, it was the woman that YOU gave me.”

“It’s actually Your fault, God, if You had not given me the woman, who knows?”

The woman said, “The **serpent** beguiled me.”

The EXCUSE always blames someone else. Get the blame off of “ME.”

Confession says, “It is I.” “It WAS ME.”

EXCUSE says, “It was someone else.”

What meaneth this bleating of sheep and lowing of oxen?

I Samuel 15:15, “And Saul said, *THEY* . . . .”

Who in the world is “THEY?”

“Well, that’s what *THEY* said.”

“That is what *THEY* were doing.”

“And Saul said, *They* have brought them from the Amalekites: for *the people* spared the best of the sheep and of the oxen, to sacrifice unto the Lord thy God.”

Yes, it was the *people's* fault.

This brings to remembrance an often used word in our English vocabulary, the interesting word, “APOLOGIZE.” This word derives from the Greek word, APOLOGIA, which is translated “clearing, defense, or answer” in the Bible.

The real meaning of the word is:

—a verbal defense, or

—a speech in defense of self.

A speech in defense of who?

SELF!

But I thought SELF was dead in Christ. Someone has aptly put it this way, “I thought the *Old Man* was dead, but he only fainted.”

That self life wants to keep rising up from time to time.

This is what happens when the apology is given. “You understand, it really was not my fault.”

“If I had known that you would find out what I said about you, I would have never said it, because I didn’t want to hurt you. I didn’t expect Mary to blab.” (It was Mary’s fault.) “I’m SORRY, Dear.”

Yeah, you’re sorry that you got caught.

Whenever someone comes up and says, “I would like to apologize,” they can mean one of two things:

(1) I would like to present a speech in defense of myself, OR

(2) I’m truly repentant and I want to confess that I identify with the crime against you. I want to ask your forgiveness because I have no excuse. I was wrong. I’m guilty.

#2 will set you free, whether or not they forgive.

#I will keep the sin hidden.

You might ask, “Brother Martin, are you saying that I should never apologize or never say that I’m sorry?”

Yes, that is what I’m saying.

I’m also saying, “FESS UP,” and “Admit that you are wrong,” and “ASK FORGIVENESS.”

I dare you to take note of how many times that you make excuses in your life.

As I began to amend my own life in this area, it became instantly apparent that I had quite a job on my hands to change these life-long habits.

A young couple asked me to officiate at their wedding at 2 P.M. on a certain

Saturday. I agreed, and marked my calendar accordingly.

That day arrived, and as it did I decided to catch up on some things around the house, out in the yard, and in the workshop, etc. We had not eaten all day so my wife prepared an early afternoon brunch. As we sat down at the table to enjoy this Saturday meal, the phone rang.

My wife answered and, after a pause, EXCLAIMED, “WEDDING!!!”

It didn’t take me long to put 2 and 2 together. A 2:00 o’clock wedding and my clock on the wall said 2:30. Here I sat about to tickle my palate with some well-deserved delicacies, attired in my puttering clothes, and wearing a day’s growth of beard, saying, “OH, NO! I forgot the wedding!”

Have you ever attended a wedding where the preacher failed to show up? What a predicament.

My wife (trying to protect me, bless her heart) asked, “What should I tell them?”

I said, “Tell them the truth, I forgot.”

She said, “Let’s see, I’ll tell them, hummm, I’ll tell them you got busy around the house, or I’ll

“TELL THEM I FORGOT,” I yelled, as my wife, trying to cover the mouthpiece of the phone from our conversation, continued to debate on what to tell them.

All I could say was that I had forgotten and I would be there as soon as possible, which was after a few bites, a shave, a change of clothes, and a twenty minute drive.

All the way there I kept saying to myself, “I will not apologize, I will not say I’m sorry, but I will ask them to please forgive me because the fact was, their wedding had not crossed my mind one time during the whole day.”

“I will not say I’m sorry, I will not say I’m sorry.”

I finally arrived. Collecting all of the composure that I could muster up, I entered the home where the wedding was to take place.

As all the eyes in the room seemed to focus upon my entrance, I blew it with, “Sorry I’m late, folks.”

Before I knew it, those words had once more escaped my lips. As soon as I heard them, in an attempt to correct them, I shouted, “NO, I’M NOT!”

Then I continued, “Would you please forgive me for being late for your wedding: I have no excuse, I had it on my calendar but I simply forgot. Your wedding was the farthest thing from my mind today.”

They did, and I was forgiven and truly sorry, with a repentant attitude.

To continue to expose the reality of this SUBTLETY in our daily life, I would like to recall a couple of other personal incidents.

One day as my wife and I were shopping we discovered a beautiful piece of wine-colored velvet material that looked fit for a king. We decided that I should have a nice casual pullover shirt made of this material. Therefore we bought the material, along with a pattern.

Months later I asked my wife about my shirt that she was supposed to make for me. Her answer was, “Well, you never did try on the pattern.”

Well, first of all, I didn’t know that I had to try the pattern; secondly, I did not know how to try a pattern; and thirdly, I didn’t know where the pattern was.

But, she insisted that it was my fault and not hers that the shirt was not made.

A few days later I asked about the shirt again. Her answer was the same, “You didn’t try the pattern on yet. I can’t make your shirt until you try the pattern.”

My argument was unchanged, “Honey, *You* have to try the pattern on me, because I certainly cannot.” But she continued to insist that the delay was my fault.

As we sat there trying to decide who would take the blame, it became apparent once more HOW DEEPLY it is inbred into us to offer the excuse instead of the confession.

In another incident as I continued to examine myself in this area, I found myself running late one day and in a hurry, driving on a freeway, a little faster than the speed limit.

Suddenly I passed a parked police car. Well, you may know the normal reactions, but the one that impressed me most was that I had automatically started listing in my mind all the reasons I would offer to the policeman if he pulled out to stop me.

I had some very good things to say:

—the importance of my timely arrival—

—the reason for my late departure—

—I really wasn’t going *that* fast—

—I was a minister of the Gospel—(some testimony)—

—It was not endangering anyone—

—It was good clear driving conditions—

Bla—bla—bla—

As I continued on, while periodically checking the rear view mirror, a little voice spoke to my conscience, “Why are you preparing all of those excuses?”

My immediate response was, “These are not excuses, these are true facts, and after all, this is me, Lord.”

I was really surprised as I realized what I was doing in my mind. I had trained myself to automatically defend my actions, although I was wrong. I found myself contending with myself.

I finally had to decide that I would do the right thing if the law stopped me. I would say, “Yes, sir, you caught me in the wrong and I’ll receive anything that you decide is due me.”

That is what God asks of us, to confess so that He can forgive us. Actually He has already forgiven us; all man needs to do is to come in and receive His grace and mercy.

As an old Southern black gentleman once put it, “The reason I don’t have any worries is because I’m not like most white folks. They want justice, but I just plead guilty and ask for mercy.”

Obedience is simple, but profound.

Unbelief gets complicated, and is deathly.

What am I saying? I’m saying that the excuse is offered because you still think you are right.

King Saul said, “The **PEOPLE**.”

“They have brought back animals to sacrifice unto the Lord thy God; and the rest **WE** (NOTICE THAT WE), WE, have utterly destroyed.”

Now at this point in the Bible story, the rebuke had not been given yet. Saul was only explaining where the sheep and oxen came from and whose fault it was.

The following Scripture tells us of the rebuke: “Then Samuel said unto Saul, Stay, and I will tell thee what the Lord hath said to me this night. And he said unto him, Say on. And Samuel said, When thou wast little in thine own sight, wast thou not made the head of the tribes of Israel, and the Lord anointed thee king over Israel? And the Lord sent thee on a journey, and said, Go and utterly destroy the sinners the Amalekites, and fight against them until they be consumed. Wherefore then didst thou not obey the voice of the Lord, but didst fly upon the spoil, and didst evil in the sight of the Lord? And Saul said unto Samuel, Yea, I have obeyed the voice of the Lord, and have gone the way which the Lord sent me, and have brought Agag the king of Amalek, and have utterly destroyed the Amelekites. But the people took of the spoil, sheep and oxen, the chief of the things which should have been utterly destroyed, to sacrifice unto the Lord thy God in Gilgal.” (I Samuel 15:16-21).



The rebuke was very definite, “Why did thou not obey the voice of the Lord?”

Saul’s answer was, “I did obey. I brought Agag the king.”

But God said to kill Agag the king. Saul actually thought that he had obeyed God, when he did nothing of the sort. How can a man come to that point? He is fooling himself. If you will recall the teaching of *Part One* of this book, then you understand that this is a symptom of unbelief, or better yet, a result of continued unbelief and insubordination. This did not develop overnight, but was building for many years in Saul’s life.

He was rebuked earlier for offering a sacrifice on the altar. Only a priest was qualified to do this. In I Samuel 13:12-14, “I forced myself therefore, and offered a burnt offering.” In other words, “I really didn’t want to do it.”

Through practice of unbelief (disobedience) Saul arrived at the point that he could live in sin and actually think that he was O.K.

Listen to him speak: “But the *people* took of the spoil, sheep and oxen, the chief of the things which *SHOULD have been utterly destroyed*, to sacrifice unto the Lord thy God in Gilgal.”

We are now going to proceed to the next point of our outline.

We have seen the:

CALL

TASK

FAILURE

REBUKE and

EXCUSE.

The final point is the PENALTY.

We must realize at this point that it is not necessary that the penalty come. The penalty comes only after continued excuses are offered. In fact, the **rebuke** is not needed if there is no **failure**. So please understand that the penalty comes only as a last resort, but when it does come, it is too late to confess. Confession will do no good at this point, as we will see in the life of King Saul.

## **F. THE PENALTY**

The penalty comes only **after** the excuses.

In the event that excuses are not offered and complete confession is made from a repentant heart, then instead of the penalty, forgiveness comes.

Penalty is the wages of unbelief. The wages of sin is death.

Let's read the Scripture as Samuel speaks God's judgment upon Saul: "And Samuel said, Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, he hath also rejected thee from being king." (I Samuel 15:22-23).

What bitter words to receive, "He hath also rejected thee from being king."

With the hearing of these words, Saul immediately confessed, "Samuel, I have sinned: for I have transgressed the commandment of the Lord, and thy words: because I feared the people and obeyed their voice." (verse 24).

Now here is a perfect confession except for one problem—it came too late.

TOO late? Why is it too late?

Because it came after the penalty was announced. It should have been offered at the rebuke. The rebuke was sent by God to provoke Saul to confess, but he only produced excuses. Now it is too late.

Now Saul is trying to return to the Lord as he had done many times before.

"Now therefore, I pray thee, pardon my sin, and turn again with me, that I may worship the Lord." (verse 25).

"NO, it's too late, Saul," was the answer.

What a sad ending. Saul could no longer receive instructions from the Lord. He even employed the witch of Endor, with no help. It's no wonder why Saul became a mental case.

An interesting note in the Scripture is the familiar term, "for rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft."

Basically, witchcraft is trying to overpower someone else's will. It is the endeavor to control others, making their will submit to my will.

Rebellion is as witchcraft.

This is when someone will attempt to make God's will submit to their own will. It is saying, in effect, "I don't like what God said (HIS WILL) so therefore I will exercise my will above His."

"Yes, I know what the Bible says, BUT this is what I think."

There are those two words again, “BUT” and

“He, that being often reprov'd hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy” (Proverbs 29:1).

I Samuel 16:1, “And the Lord said unto Samuel, How long wilt thou mourn for Saul, seeing I have rejected him from reigning over Israel? fill thine horn with oil, and go, I will send thee to Jesse the Bethlehemite: for I have provided me a king among his sons.”

### **Other Books By FRANCIS MARTIN**

Hung By The Tongue	\$1.95
Loose From The Noose	\$1.95
Relative Humility 100	\$1.95